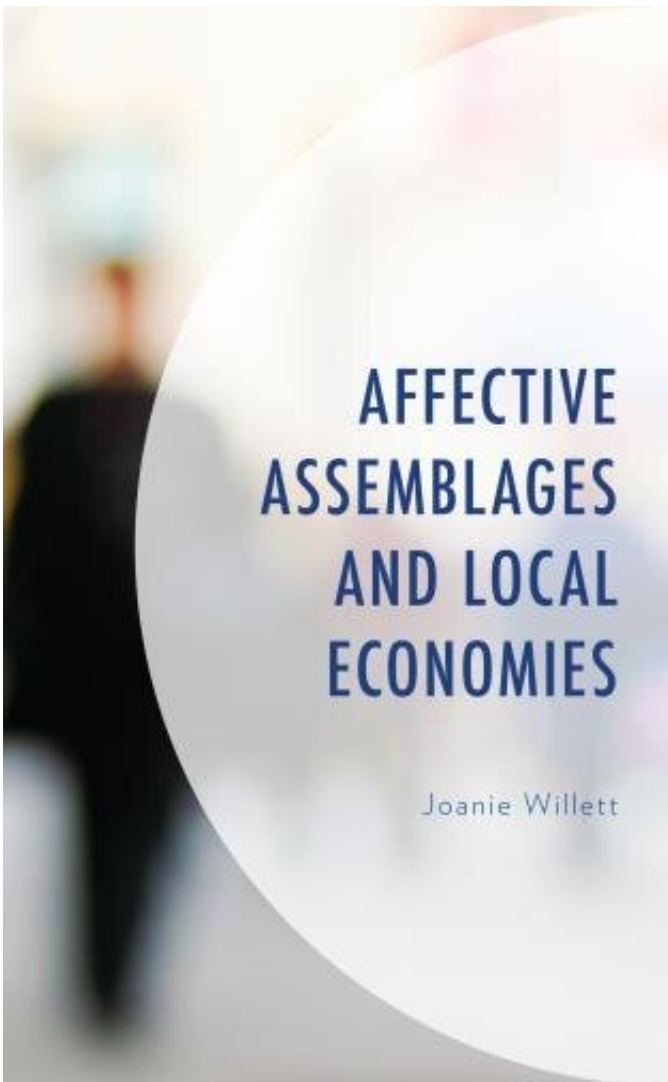


# Talent in rural Cornwall 'wasted' due to poor public transport and lack of internet access

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Credit: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

The skills of talented people in living in rural Cornwall are being wasted because of poor public transport and lack of internet access, a new study warns.

The absence of the necessary human networks and infrastructure is stopping people accessing jobs, getting to workplaces and hearing about opportunities.

Dr. Joanie Willett, from the University of Exeter, found new jobs in Cornwall are either invisible or feel inaccessible to people because they are not aware of changes to the local economy. Her findings are detailed in a new book, "Affective Assemblages and Local Economies."

The research shows how the lack of involvement of communities in economic change leads to existing inequalities becoming more deeply entrenched, and greater resentment and frustration.

Dr. Willett said: "There is a really important talent pool that is under-used because of the difficulties that people have accessing information. There are also important infrastructural problems that mean that people are not physically able to connect with new opportunities.

"We need to begin looking at regional economies from different starting points, thinking about the experience of people living and working in the [region](#). We need to explore and understand the spaces where vital connections are not yet being made."

Dr. Willett carried out in-depth interviews with 50 people—members of the public and policymakers—in Cornwall and the Southwest Virginia in the U.S. Both are rural regions which have experienced massive economic change in recent years. She asked them what they thought about living in their regions, and what living in their regions was like for them.

Both regions had a skilled and available labor force but people were nostalgic about jobs which had been lost because of rapid changes, and didn't know enough about the new economy. This meant that many people were overqualified for the jobs that they took, or didn't know what kind of skills that they needed for the local labor market.

In Cornwall, people reported having to upskill to survive in the labor market. Other problems were infrastructural. In Southwest Virginia this included severe difficulties getting internet outside of the towns. In Cornwall issues with rural public transport made it impossible for people to get to some available [jobs](#). The study shows people put up with this because they had a had a deep attachment to where they lived.

Dr. Willett said: "Both regions had experienced a lot of economic change over previous decades. People often talked about the [economy](#) in terms of loss—the things that they no longer had—rather than the things that they had now.

"Systems have been put in place in order to improve [local economies](#), but that these systems are unable to work as intended because important connecting spaces have become overlooked.

"Decision-makers in both locations can often and easily tell a story of forward movement and increasing opportunities. But this story is often not visible to regular [people](#), who consequently experience struggle and decline."

Provided by University of Exeter

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